

An interview with Dr. Charles Roll

DR. CHARLES ROLL

An Interview Conducted by

Jane Hazledine

April 4, 1980

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April 10, 1980

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NARRATOR DATA SHEET

May 1980

DATE

Name of narrator: Dr. Charles Roll

Address: 2614 N. 8th St., Terre Haute, IN 47804 Phone: 466-3970

Birthdate: August 8, 1883 Birthplace: Near Riley, IN

Date of death: 01/07/82

Length of residence in Terre Haute: 70 years (1913-1980)

Education: Country school; Indiana State Normal, 1902-1906;
Indiana University, 1907-1910, A.B.; Univ. of Wisconsin, 1910-1912, A.M.;
Doctor of Letters, 1974, Indiana State University (Honorary)

Occupational history: Teacher, country school, 1901-04; high school,
Columbus, IN, 1907-10; Univ. of Wisconsin, assistant in history,
1912-13; Indiana State University, prof. of history, 1913-51.

Special interests, activities, etc. Reading, travel in U.S. and
England. As an Emeriti Prof., spent much time reading in the
library of Indiana State University.

Major subject(s) of interview: Early life in Vigo County, early
education, transportation, Indiana State in earlier days. Narrator's
parents and children; mobility of life pursuits today.

No. of tapes: 1 Length of interview: 30 min.

Terms of legal agreement: _____

Interviewing sessions:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Interviewer</u>
04/04/80	approx. 1 hr.	At Dr. Roll's residence	Jane Hazledine
04/10/80	1 hr.	" "	Jane Hazledine

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DR. CHARLES ROLL

Tape 1

April 4, 1980

Dr. Roll's Home -- 2614 N. 8th Street, Terre Haute, Indiana

INTERVIEWER: Jane Hazledine

TRANSCRIBER: Jane Pursell

For: Vigo County Oral History Program

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JH: This is April 4, 1980. I am Jane Hazledine speaking with Dr. Charles Roll, Professor Emeritus of History, Indiana State University.

Dr. Roll, tell us about your family background and your life during almost a century of active living. When were you born and where?

ROLL: All right, all right. Well, my mother was a Shaw. Her ancestors came from England originally. Sometime in the 18th century before the Revolution John Cox Shaw came to the United States. About six weeks after he came here, he had a son by the name of Jesse Shaw. Jesse drifted to Kentucky and he was the father of my grandfather. My grandfather was born about 1815 and as I said, his name was Shaw. My grandfather married into the Moore family, Elizabeth Moore. And in those days they had big families. My grandfather Shaw and my grandmother, Elizabeth Moore, had 11 children. Seven of them were born in Kentucky before they came to Indiana. Then about 1854 about six or seven years before the outbreak of the Civil War, they came with the Moores. Families went together oftentimes, traveled together. They decided to come to Indiana. So there was . . . a little caravan of four covered wagons that crossed the Ohio River. They left their farm which was about 15 miles south of Louisville and crossed the Ohio and came up into southern Indiana near Farmersburg; and there he bought land from the Government for \$2.50 an acre, broke that ground with oxen, and he built a log cabin.

There the first Indiana child was born, my mother . . . Mary, Mary Jane Shaw in 1854. No, I beg your pardon. She was born in 1856 -- two years after they came to Indiana. She was born in 1856 and she was born in a log cabin. So after all we're pretty close to the days of the covered wagon, the log cabin, oxen, and those pioneers, and the spinning wheel which they knew too. That way.

ROLL: Well, I've often thought if that little caravan had not crossed the Ohio River from Kentucky into Indiana when they did, I wouldn't be here today because my mother wouldn't have married my father later. So that I would not be here were it not for that little caravan that came up to Indiana at that time.

Well, now later some of these, some of the Shaws . . . one of them at least moved to Illinois. Two of them moved to Missouri. One of them settled in Colorado. His son, who would be my cousin, went to California. There's a daughter still living, a daughter of that son that went to California, who writes to me at Christmas time. That way . . . she would be my second cousin, Florence. And so there is a perfect example of the western movement in American history -- it seems to me.

Well, coming down to a later period, my children then . . . they took the back trail. My daughter, Helen, after graduating at DePauw University, went East . . . and became a registered nurse studying at Johns Hopkins University. My son, Robert, he graduated . . . had a Rector's scholarship at DePauw. That's why he went to DePauw. I think your father went over there, too [interviewer's father]. Went to DePauw. After he graduated there, he went to Harvard Law School and became He graduated at Harvard, Harvard Law, [and] became a lawyer in New York where he still is a practicing lawyer with a huge corporation. Let's see, the name of the corporation [was] The American [Electric Power]. So in brief that is the history of my ancestors and family.

Going back to my education, of course, I was born on a farm about 12 miles south of Terre Haute, south of Riley. There I went to a country school. It was a one-room school. The teacher taught all the grades. When you got to the eighth grade -- as I told you the other day -- there wasn't anyplace, any high school, to go to so we just kept repeating over and over for about four years. Finally, after that I decided to come up here to the old Normal School [now Indiana State University] and take one term which would qualify me to teach school in the country.

ROLL: And I took a country school. Well, I kept that up about three or four years. I would teach during the fall and winter; and then in the summer -- in the spring and summer -- I would come here Terre Haute and take the . . . and work. That way, finally, I got a diploma, not a degree, in 1906. I suspect I am one of the oldest living graduates of the old Normal School. And I . . . got a little better position, of course, then. I got a position as head of the history department down at Columbus High School, which was one of the best high schools in the state of Indiana.

I was at Columbus four years. In the summertime I would go to Bloomington to attend Indiana University. Then I would come back and teach during the year there at Columbus. Finally, in 1910, I got an AB degree at Indiana University. Well, when I was at Indiana, in one of my classes there was a girl -- a woman -- Miss McCardel who came from Tipton, Indiana. She had been attending the University of Wisconsin at Madison. So one summer . . . well, I decided to go . . . Miss McCardel had been doing it. I went up to Madison, Wisconsin, to the University of Wisconsin -- attracted there by some of the outstanding professors, especially Frederick Jackson Turner, an outstanding professor in the . . . He was known for his knowledge of the history of the west. I took work under Turner.

Miss McCardel introduced me to her roommate. Her roommate was from Tipton, too. I immediately fell in love with this roommate Miss Sylvia Opal McShane. I guess she must have been in love with me, too, because later we married. And then I went back to Columbus, taught one more year there, and then resigned there. I went back to Madison as an assistant in the history department where I graded papers, met quiz sections and took some work there. I worked on my Master's. I took my Master's degree there at Madison about -- let's see -- about 1912. That was the year that our little boy Robert, now a lawyer in New York, was born. So I was able to live in this little apartment, have a son and all for about \$400. That wouldn't go very far today.. That wouldn't do more than a month or two. I think I had some left over then.

ROLL: Well, I got an offer to come back to Indiana State which I did. And there in about 1913, I became a member of the faculty at Indiana State and remained there until I retired in 1951, something over 40 years. In the beginning at Indiana State, I ranged over quite a large field -- not only American history which was really my field but also European history, ancient, medieval, modern, and even taught a course in government and a course in economics. Nowadays, of course, there is very much more specialization. Later on I was able to specialize more here than I could in the beginning when I started out.

Well, that in brief is the story of my ancestry and family and education for what it's worth. Turning to transportation and travel now -- going back to my boyhood on the farm -- there was no automobile. There was no airplane. Just dirt roads. The matter of coming to Terre Haute in a horse and buggy drawn vehicle was about three hours to get up here to Terre Haute.

Well, so it was a different world from the world in which we live today. As I say, no automobiles. I can remember the first automobile. I can remember when I thought the time will come when vehicles would be running around without horses. I felt that time would come sometime. Of course, it did. And today, the matter of a trip from that area up here is 15 or 20 minutes. Then it was three hours. That was the difference.

Well, now about the airplane. For many years I would go East in the summer to see my children. To New York. I would take the bus, because Let me go back just a moment. Speaking about the earlier transportation there, the electricity came in and with the electricity the interurbans. The interurbans ran all over Indiana and then interurbans gave way finally to the bus. Well, I would go to New York. I was a bus traveler. I went by bus for two or three reasons. Time didn't mean anything. I had more time than anything else. In the second place, I really enjoyed going through the Pennsylvania mountains, the Pennsylvania Dutch country, and so on. So, it would take maybe a day and a night. I would have to be out one night just to do that.

ROLL: Finally, my children began to complain about that. They said that it's not safe. The buses would come into the Port Authority station. And they would say it's not safe to do it. There are all kinds of people there just looking for people like me and so, finally, they prevailed upon me to take an airplane. So some friends, the Engellands, took me to Indianapolis and I took a TWA flight. Oh, that's four or five years ago. And I thought it was one of the most wonderful experiences I have ever had -- flying above the clouds that way. Well, I wouldn't think of doing anything else -- any other way now.

Well, that is about all I have to say about transportation and travel right now. Finally . . . oh, yes. Let me go back just a moment when I was talking about education and so on. About my grandchildren. My daughter finally married. [She] became a housewife, and she had a daughter. Her daughter was named Helen, too. This daughter went [to and] graduated at New York University. Don't your sister teach at New York University? Well, my granddaughter graduated there. She was an outstanding student apparently, an outstanding student. And after she graduated there, she took a test. They gave tests to determine what graduate school they can get into. Well, she took a test. She didn't think she did too well. She took a test to get into law school. Now, in the old days you didn't think about women going into law but they go into law and medicine now. But apparently she did pretty well. Better than she thought she did because she got into the very top. She got into the Harvard Law School. This summer she will graduate at Harvard Law. Already she has a position with the Department of Justice in Washington.

Well, now that's my granddaughter. My grandson, Robert's son, [is] Charles Robert, Jr. He was in the government service. [He was] stationed for quite some time in Taiwan. He had met a girl in high school. He sent for her. He got lonely. She was in Europe so they sent for her. She went to Taiwan and they were married there some years ago.

ROLL: He came back to this country. He got a scholarship at the University of California, Berkeley. He graduated there. Then he took graduate work at Harvard. Also he got a Doctor's degree at Harvard -- Phi Beta Kappa key. Then he got a position in California with the Rand Corporation, an investigatory organization. He is there yet but he thinks maybe he will come back to Washington this summer. I don't know about that.

Well, so much about education and family and the like. Now a word about Terre Haute and the changes that I've seen come there. Well, back in those days . . . I can go back to the days of horse-drawn vehicles when horses and mules were driven and pulled cars on Wabash Avenue and the streets.

Well, later, of course, electricity came in and now the buses. But it was not only a change that takes place in the transportation that way but . . . I think Another thing, Terre Haute didn't have too good a reputation, as you know, then. Especially the West End was vice-ridden. I think that Terre Haute has shown great improvement in that respect. I think it has been cleaned up and so it is a much better place to live than it was in that respect.

On the other hand, Wabash Avenue apparently has deteriorated considerably in the last few years. What's happened is that industry has moved from Wabash Avenue down South 3rd Street and US 41, that way. They are trying to revamp it, and I think maybe they will improve it as time goes on. But it has changed very much there and so That is about all I have to say about it.

END OF SIDE ONE

Tape 1-Side 2

JH: This is April 10, 1980. We are continuing an interview with Dr. Charles Roll, Professor Emeritus in History, Indiana State University. He is going

JH: to tell us something about his travels, his desire to do mountain climbing, some of his interesting life on the farm, on to higher education, Indiana State Normal School, and Terre Haute before the 20's. Dr. Roll, tell us about this.

ROLL: Thank you. First of all, I want to go back and mention something that I think is very important . . . to the whole thing. That is this migration from Kentucky of Temple Shaw and his young wife and seven children from Kentucky across the Ohio River up into Indiana near Farmersburg where they settled in a log cabin. That was in 1854. Two years later, my mother, the first child born -- the first of four born in Indiana -- was born. So I've often thought that if it hadn't been for that migration across the Ohio up into Indiana there back in 1854, seven years before the Civil War, that I never would have been born. My mother was born two years after that migration in a log cabin; and, as I pointed out the other day, we are not so far removed from covered wagons, log cabins and spinning wheel days, that is, pioneer times. Of course, we are very different now -- very, very different -- but, as I say, not too far removed from that period.

Now my mother, later when she grew up, became a teacher in the schools. She attended a seminary down, I think, at Farmersburg, taught by a veteran of the Civil War, Captain Crawford they called him. It was a famous seminary, and she was an outstanding student. She delivered the valedictory, as they called it, address on that occasion of the graduation. Well, she became a country school teacher; and it was perfectly natural that I should follow in her footsteps, which I did.

Then concerning travel -- it's a long way from the horse and buggy days of my early life to the airplane of today. I have often wondered if that development that took place there between the horse and buggy period and the airplane there, whether the next hundred years will bring about similar development. I doubt it. I don't see how; I don't see quite how it could be that way.

ROLL: Also, I had the hay fever as a young boy and a young man pretty bad. Very annoying disease. So we took to going to Colorado; and after my young family grew up, they would go with me. I became quite a mountain climber in Colorado. I climbed Pike's Peak down near Colorado Springs. That was my first one, I think. Then later I climbed Mt. Evans, west of Denver in the mountains, but mainly up in the Estes Park area, Long's Peak up to timber line and all around that area there.

But it was not only travel in the United States that intrigued me but also travel in Europe. However, I was never able to do that until probably too late in life after I retired as a teacher. I finally . . . I retired in 1951 from Indiana State and in 1952 my long desire to go to Europe was finally realized; and I went just before the days of air travel over the Atlantic so I traveled in the Queen Mary going over and returned in the Queen Elizabeth -- the two finest ships afloat, I suppose. They are both now long since retired.

That desire to go to Europe was chiefly a desire to visit England. There is where my ancestors came from in the first place as I pointed out the other day. And also for many years in high school and later in college in Indiana State, I taught English history so I know English history pretty well. In the two or three months, I spent practically all of that time in England.

I traveled over most of it to Oxford and Cambridge and later up to Stratford-on-Avon. It is the home of Shakespeare, you know, and I saw the little church of the Holy Trinity where he is buried. From Stratford I went on up to the Lake District in northern England and then from there up into Scotland where I spent a few very interesting days in southern Scotland. Then, before I came home, I took another trip from London. I'd go out on these trips and then come back and make London sort of my headquarters. It was a most interesting city. Of course, I saw young Queen Elizabeth there on the occasion of her birthday and the trooping of the colors they call that ceremony. In front of Buckingham Palace I saw her go by in this parade. Hundreds, thousands of people there watched it.

ROLL: Well, a little later I took occasion to do down to Canterbury. I was in Canterbury Cathedral and attended services there. One hears talk about the English people being offish and distant, but I didn't find that so at all. They were most friendly. Just to illustrate, when I got down there to Canterbury, I found out that I had two different reservations, two different places. The English-speaking Union that I joined in London and stayed at their headquarters when I was there had sent along and made a reservation and somewhere or other there was another one came up. So I went to the first one now and I said, "I'm in trouble. I've got two reservations here, one at the other place and here." It was the other place I went. He said, "That's all right. Just go to whichever one you want to." So I did.

Well, then on a weekend since I was near the coast, I went on down to Dover and then across on a little ship the English Channel. I went by rail to Paris where I spent a most interesting two or three days. But that was the extent of my trip, of my visit to Europe.

Well, I think maybe it's about time to get back to life as I knew it as a boy and in early times here in Indiana. We lived on a farm south of Riley. It was not a large farm. It was a small, rather small farm -- a 60-acre farm. A small farm. And the crops from that would have hardly supported the family so we had a small herd of cattle as most of the farmers, practically all of the farmers did. Not a large herd but a small herd. The cows were all named. We had names for them. They were almost like members of the family. That was true of the horses and even the hogs, the pigs. My sister named the pigs there.

Well, we had this small herd of cattle; and we had milk and butter and that was one of the principal sources of our income. They would take the butter to market and trade it for things that they needed there. That was one source. Also, we had chickens. Practically all the farmers had chickens, flocks of chickens, so we had eggs and we gathered eggs. That was one of the tasks of the boys, of the young children, to gather the eggs in the evening. And also to gather

ROLL: the kindling in for the stove. Well, so we would market these eggs. As I say, that was another source [of income] besides the butter -- that way. But we were not -- I suppose we were poor. We did . . . we were poor [but] didn't know it; we were poor. We were very, very poor and didn't know it. My desire to go to college was influenced, I presume, in part by the fact that we lived not too far from the old Normal. That was college for us, to us, then that way. And so when I . . . after I got old enough to do it -- I wasn't, I don't think I was old enough . . . I was only probably sixteen or seventeen then when I came up here to the old Normal which I mentioned the other day. [I] then went out and taught in the country. [I] kept that up for three or four years that way until we finally got time to come to the Normal and spend a year there and get a diploma.

And then about the library [the old Normal School library]. The library in those early days was just a big room in the main building. There was just one main building and it had the library. And you had to be pretty quiet in there because of its location. Many of the students were always getting into trouble there. I remember then, as a member of the faculty of the school, when that was abandoned and the new library in what we now know as the quad, the quadrangle, was constructed.

And I remember the dedication there. I certainly hadn't been here very long because my wife was still young and the On that dedication of that library with your father [interviewer's father] as the librarian, the library was decorated with palms and all. Mr. [Arthur] Cunningham's wife, she looked My wife thought it was all grand. [It was] very grand to her, young as this young girl. But that was the library. Now, it is abandoned and the new Cunningham Memorial Library has been built.

The students didn't have wonderful dormitories to live in like they have now. In fact, they didn't have any dormitories in the beginning but rather they stayed at private homes. A great many people in Terre Haute used that as a source of income. They

ROLL: would have students stay with them. The first dorm to be built, I believe, was Reeve Hall, now a business part -- it's on the quadrangle. And then from there on, we had other, many others constructed. And the students were There were not too many. I think [there were] about seven or eight hundred students only. In fact, I haven't counted up but I think there are more members of the faculty today, more members of the faculty than the whole student body back there in those, those early days. Then when the war came on and so on, the student body declined even more. [The college] almost disappeared but President [William W.] Parsons managed to hold on, however, and it didn't close its doors. It did not close its doors.

About Terre Haute. About the early travel on the streets. Well, I can just remember that. I must have been a very small boy before I came here to live. I can remember when we had horse and mule drawn cars running along the streets. I can remember that very well. Well, that finally gave way to electricity. And they had these tracks laid. And the electric, the electric . . . street cars. At the same time we had the interurban. [It] came into existence. [It was] electric [and] linked up Terre Haute with the surrounding country, the surrounding towns that way. Of course, that has given way now to buses, to the bus. So there has been a lot of change take place there.

JH: You were a great walker my notes say. Did you?

ROLL: Well . . . I for many, many years We built a house where I still live. [It is] north of Collett Park up on North 8th [Street]. It must be almost two miles from the center of the city and north from the Normal. I never thought of riding but for many, many years I would walk down in the morning and then would return, would walk back in the afternoon. That constant walking to and fro there probably was good for me. I might not be living today . . . to be as old as I am. I don't know whether I mentioned how old I am. I was born in 1883. You can figure it out. I was born in 1883 so I must be about I must be 96 years old -- 97 this coming August. That is my age. Whether my family [walked] I

ROLL: don't think my family walked as much as I did. My children didn't have so far to go to high school so that it wasn't much of a problem. There. I seem to have been the walker of the family.

Well, I can't think of anything else but . . . that's about it.

JH: Thank you, Dr. Roll, very much.

END OF TAPE

JH: Dr. Roll added, after he read this, that he should have said more about the farm. He said his father never really liked farming, probably would have preferred to be in commerce, stores, etc. But Dr. Roll recalls the sights and sounds of the farm with pleasure, the fireflies in summer, the smell of fresh earth, the haying and his related jobs. Each wagon had a different squeak and you could tell when his father came up the road.

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